

**QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 4 APRIL 2019**

The following questions have been received under Standing Order 8.1. The draft replies, which are subject to amendment, are set out below.

“Councillors are thanked for their questions.”

1. Question from Councillor M A Bridgeman

“I am very concerned that problems at Woking Pool in the Park are still continuing after a considerable time. There are particularly issues regarding the water temperature, inadequate Heating of the building and general cleanliness. Six months ago I was referred by the hospital to attend for Physio in the pool my appointments were continuously being cancelled due to faults with the lagoon pool. Having paid up front for this service no refund has been offered. I am also concerned that the lift is constantly out of order so disabled residents using crutches are being forced to use the stairs. When will these problems be resolved and how many complaints have been made by Woking residents since Freedom Leisure were originally asked to take over the contract.”

Reply from Councillor C S Kemp

“Woking Pool in the Park has been and continues to undergo some significant building works. The facilities boiler system, which is managed by Woking Borough Council, failed and a temporary system was designed and installed several weeks ago. Since then temperatures have consistently achieved the recommended and contracted settings, however the temporary system is not adept enough to raise the temperature to the higher set point which some disabled group users have requested.

Woking Borough Council has a project underway to replace all of the heating and cooling plant at Pool in the Park, Woking Leisure Centre and the Community Building. Part of the design is to create a heat source at Pool in the Park that is capable of raising and lowering temperatures within reasonable time periods to suit the various user groups at the pool. Should everything go to plan, a phased approach will deliver improvements to Pool in the Park first but will ultimately complete improvements at all facilities by the end of Summer.

With regards to the lift at Pool in the Park, there have been 4 individual occasions over the past 6 months when it has been out of action. Each occasion has been for a short period of time, the longest being 3 days. When the lift is out of action disabled users are able to use an alternative access at the rear of the building entering on the pool level. However it is accepted this needs to be improved and Freedom are talking with the lift contractors to ensure they have a better stock of parts so that repairs can be made on the day rather than having small delays.

Further improvements to Pool in the Park will be undertaken throughout the year. The team of cleaners has been increased to keep on top of cleanliness during this period.

With regards to a referral from the hospital for physio in the pool this isn't something that is currently offered by Freedom Leisure at Pool in the Park. I am therefore unclear what it is you have paid for but if you contact Catherine Bowyer, the Pool in the Park Manager, she would be happy to discuss this matter with you further.”

2. Question from Councillor L M N Morales

“How much has it cost the Council to post out letters to all residents in the Hoe Valley Neighbourhood Forum area, following the cancelling of the formal adoption of the forum by the Council.”

Reply from Councillor A C L Bowes

“It is wrong to say the formal adoption of the Forum was cancelled. Every effort was made to bring this matter to tonight’s Council meeting but it was not possible to get all the necessary information together in time. Nevertheless, letters were sent out to residents informing them of the position at an approximate cost of £2,250.”

3. Question from Councillor L M N Morales

“As the Neighbourhood Forum has paid substantial sums to inform residents of the date of this formal adoption, can the Council confirm that they will fund the renotification as soon as the new date is confirmed.”

Reply from Councillor A C L Bowes

“Officers will notify every household in the proposed Neighbourhood Area when the revised date for considering the application is confirmed and it will publicise it on the Council website and through the press.”

4. Question from Councillor L M N Morales

“How many development or safeguarded sites identified in the emerging Site Allocation DPD are within each of the current neighbourhood forum areas?”

Reply from Councillor A C L Bowes

“There are five designated Neighbourhood Areas within the Borough. The number of allocated or safeguarded sites in the emerging Site Allocations DPD, which falls within these Neighbourhood Areas, are as follows:

<b>Neighbourhood Area</b>	<b>Number of proposed allocated or safeguarded sites in the Site Allocations DPD within the urban area and the Green Belt</b>
Byfleet	3
West Byfleet	6
Hook Heath	1 site safeguarded for Green Infrastructure
Pyrford	0
Brookwood	3 (this includes Brookwood Cemetery)

It should be noted that the Site Allocations DPD also allocates land for Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGS) and infrastructure in Byfleet, West Byfleet and Brookwood.”

5. Question from Councillor A-M Barker

“How many tickets have been handed out by parking wardens during school pick up and drop off time parking patrols in each of the last 5 years?”

Reply from Councillor C S Kemp

“I regret that in the time provided it has not been possible to provide the data requested and practically it would be difficult to collate as information is not automatically recorded in this way. However, I can confirm it is the case that school parking patrols rarely result in penalty charge notices being issued and the patrols are more of a visual deterrent concentrating on priority areas agreed periodically with the Parking Task Group.”

6. Question from Councillor A-M Barker

“How is the effectiveness of the parking wardens school parking patrol evaluated?”

Reply from Councillor C S Kemp

“Officers undertook a full review of school enforcement working directly with the Parking Task Group to ensure that available resource is allocated to maximise effectiveness and visibility of patrols.”

7. Question from Councillor K Howard

“What progress has so far been made towards the commencement of chewing gum recycling in the town?”

Reply from Councillor Mrs B A Hunwicks

“Following the response to your Notice of Motion in November 2018, Officers have confirmed that Woking Town Centre is well served by the current cleansing regime which systematically deals with gum removal as part of the continuous deep cleansing programme. It is therefore not proposed to install chewing gum recycling receptacles in the Town Centre. In the coming months we will speak directly with resident groups in other village centres to gauge support for the potential use of chewing gum receptacles.

I, along with Officers, met directly with Alison Ogden-Newton, the Chief Executive of Keep Britain Tidy, during January who was very complimentary regarding the proactive work of the Council, not least with the participation and promotion of the Chewing Gum Action Group and support to a continuous programme of Community Clear Ups. The Great British Spring Clean is ongoing to 23 April.

Most recently in a 3 week period Junior Citizen has been a priority where 23 primary schools attended with over 1,200 children taking part. The Neighbourhood Teams set was promoting being a “Good Neighbour” focusing on not dropping litter, not doing graffiti, fly tipping and not dropping chewing gum. During the session the team talked about the importance of disposing of chewing gum correctly and using the bins provided around the Borough.”

8. Question from Councillor J E Bond

“There have been a large number of confidential (i.e. Part 2) items in Woking Council meeting during the last year - far more than any other Borough in Surrey. A number of these are now resolved or in the public domain, so it would no longer seem in the public interest to keep those items secret.

It would therefore seem appropriate for all such confidential items to be regularly checked to see if confidentiality is still valid. Is there any reason that Woking Council should not adopt such a procedure?”

Reply from Councillor D J Bittleston

“A Briefing Paper was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21 January 2019. This set out the Council’s arrangements for reporting confidential information at meetings of the Council. These arrangements comply with the relevant statutory provisions, and form part of the Council’s Constitution.

The Council's practice is to include as much information as is possible in the public (Part I) part of the agenda. There will be occasions when the confidential nature of a transaction requires the Council to receive information in the private (Part II) part of the agenda, e.g. confidential details of prospective property transactions.

No comparison has been made with other Surrey Councils on the extent of information considered under Part II. However, if there is more Part II information at Woking, this would be a reflection of Woking's greater activity in contributing to the protection and enhancement of our local economy.

The Briefing Paper to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee clearly set out the procedure for declassifying Part II reports, as follows:-

*"There may be occasions where the information contained in an exempt report is no longer considered exempt. Authority to remove the exempt classification of a document lies with [the Monitoring Officer]. The [Monitoring Officer] may be asked to review a particular report and determine whether the exemption still applies."*

This procedure ensures that the need for information to be kept confidential is reviewed if, and when, there is a request for it to be released."

9. Question from Councillor J E Bond

"The Site Allocations Regulation 19 DPD was presented to Woking Councillors for decision before the relevant evidence base was completed - the SHLAA 2017 was not actually finalised and available to all councillors until several weeks later.

Why was this document presented to Councillors before they had a chance to see, understand and question the basis for the decision to use Green Belt land for development?"

Reply from Councillor A C L Bowes

"I have nothing further to say to Councillor Bond on this matter. Councillor Bond made a formal complaint to Peter Bryant (Head of Democratic and Legal Services) regarding this particular matter on 5 January 2019 which every Councillor received a copy. Peter Bryant formally responded to the complaint in his e-mail to Councillor Bond on 13 February 2019. Every Councillor received a copy of the response. Councillor Bond made a request for further consideration of the matter in his e-mail to Peter Bryant on 23 February 2019. Peter Bryant has responded that no further action will be taken in respect of the complaint. I am satisfied that this matter has already been dealt with appropriately."

10. Question from Councillor J E Bond

"A recent proposal to add a strict dress code to the rules for licensing taxis has offended many taxi drivers in Woking - and we now know that there have been no formal complaints against any taxi driver.

The only justification for these rules were some anonymous comments on social media. It does not seem at all appropriate for Woking Council policies to be determined by the social media especially when the people who made the comments are unknown and we don't even know how many drivers are being criticised.

Would Woking Council be prepared to apologise to the large number of hard working, prompt, courteous and friendly taxi drivers for any offence caused? Would the Council also like to reconsider the new dress code until it has some clear and substantive evidence to justify the new policy?"

Reply from Councillor D Harlow

“On 10 October 2017 the Licensing Committee approved the introduction of the Woking Borough Council Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Handbook (The Handbook). The Handbook contains information, policy and guidance for drivers, applicants and members of the public to ensure that there is openness and clarity. Appendix D of the Handbook outlines the Code of Good Conduct for licensed drivers. In order to promote the licensing objectives drivers are expected to follow the Code of Good Conduct. Appendix D of the Handbook states that: *Drivers shall: a) pay attention to personal hygiene and dress so as to present a professional image to the public.*

Following more recent observations and comments in respect of some of the drivers attire it was proposed to introduce further guidance to assist drivers with what the Licensing Authority understands by the phrase “professional image”. As such, a short guidance note was produced providing a clear set of standards of dress. The guidance note is not overly prescriptive but instead provides categories of acceptable and unacceptable clothing. The Licensing Committee agreed the proposal and the guidance note is to be appended to the Handbook. It should be noted that the wording used is standard wording and can be found in guidance produced by numerous licensing authorities across the country.

Asking drivers to adhere to this guidance will serve to improve the professional image of the trade within the Borough. Accordingly, it is considered the guidance in respect of the dress code for drivers should remain in place.”

11. Question from Councillor M Ali

“What efforts have the Council made to ensure that sufficient infrastructure is in place for when the tower blocks open? e.g. schools, GP, sewage etc.”

Reply from Councillor A C L Bowes

“The Council is doing a lot to ensure that sufficient infrastructure is provided to support development and address existing problems. The Council has worked with infrastructure providers to publish an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), which sets out the capacity of the existing infrastructure and how future development would impact on that. The IDP also sets out how additional infrastructure would be provided to support future development, including by whom, at what cost and to what timescales. I encourage every Councillor to read the IDP which can be accessed by this link: <http://www.woking2027.info/ldfresearch/infrastructure>. The Woking Joint Committee has already considered a report on this document and has noted the considerable amount of information that it contains on infrastructure provision. Examples of infrastructure schemes in the IDP that have been delivered and/or are being delivered includes:

- Transport improvements at the Town Centre worth about £24M;
- On-going improvements to local bus network to improve frequency and increased accessibility;
- On-going improvements to walking and cycling network;
- Working with Network Rail to deliver significant rail infrastructure improvements such as the Woking Flyover, a new Platform 6 by 2026;
- The Council has submitted a bid to central government in December 2018 to secure over £95M to replace Victoria Arch and other road improvements. The outcome of the bid is yet to be published;
- The Hoe Valley secondary school with the athletic tracks have been completed;
- Additional forms of entry are being provided at existing schools to provide additional capacity;
- The Site Allocations DPD is making provision for a number of community facilities to serve local communities;

- A new fire station has been built, one of the best in the County;
- The Council is working to deliver flood alleviation schemes across the Borough;
- Sufficient land has been identified for Green Infrastructure, in particular for Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGs); and
- Public realm improvements within the Town Centre.

The Council continues to secure Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to help fund some of the infrastructure that will be needed. The Council will be passing on a proportion of the CIL money up to 25% to local communities where the development occurred to implement community infrastructure projects of their choice to address the impacts of development. It is obvious that every effort is being made to provide infrastructure to support development.”

12. Question from Councillor M Ali

“What is the Council’s current expenditure on the Town Development to date?”

Reply from Councillor D J Bittleston

“Loan advances to Victoria Square Woking Ltd in respect of the Victoria Square development are currently £200m. This is reported each month in the Green Book.

Over recent years the Council has also invested funds to improve the retail and leisure offering in the town centre, the public realm and the highway and cycle network.”

13. Question from Councillor M Ali

“What efforts has the Council made to ensure that all pavements are fully accessible for all - including those with wheelchairs and peaks?”

Reply from Councillor Mrs B A Hunwicks

“As Surrey County Council is the highway authority for the wider Borough the response below refers to the centre of Woking covered by a management agreement allowing Woking Borough Council to maintain and improve the street scene.

- Provision of level surfacing where possible to remove barriers and obstacles to wheelchair and mobility impaired users;
- Programme to change road textures to granite incorporating colours to give the message to drivers that they are entering areas of high pedestrian activity;
- Provision of additional crossings on established desire lines, for example the new zebra crossing outside Budgens;
- Reduction of street furniture by consolidation of road traffic signs and bollards;
- Replacing damaged and non DDA compliant bollards in areas which require greater protection of pedestrian movements;
- Continuing to make the town centre more pedestrian friendly by removing unnecessary traffic movement in some areas i.e. High Street and Chapel Street;
- Widening footways and footpaths when possible and make them more DDA compliant i.e. Church Path, Church Street East, Chapel Street and Broadway;
- Updating gully covers and drainage system to latest standards which are more wheelchair and cycle friendly; and
- Creation of dedicated cycle lanes to facilitate cycle movement without conflict with pedestrian movements.”

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REPORT ENDS